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**ADVENTIST EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA:
PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka presents a perfect picture of plenteous gospel harvest and paucity of spiritual labourers. Sri Lanka has a population of 18,900,000. Nevertheless, there are only 3,186 Seventh-day Adventists and 28 churches in the entire country.¹ Though statistics cannot adequately represent the situation yet the foregoing figures of 1999 may help to give some idea of the magnitude of the task and the smallness of the number of those who are endeavoring to encompass it. The Seventh-day Adventist church in Sri Lanka faces the stupendous task of giving the gospel message for this hour to a population of nineteen million. The very thought of the immensity of this undertaking would be completely overwhelming were it not for the promise of divine aid and for the source of supply to be found in the plan of Adventist education. A.

Brief Description of the Island

Sri Lanka is a beautiful island country in the Indian Ocean. It lies about 20 miles (32 kilometers) off the southeastern coast of India. Its official name is the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. The country was formerly called Ceylon. It became an independent nation in 1948 after nearly 450 years of European rule. Colombo, a busy seaport, is the capital and largest city. The Island has six distinct groups of people – Sinhalese, Tamils, Moors, Burghers, Malays, and Veddahs. The Sinhalese people are generally considered to be Buddhist; the Tamils, Hindus; the Moors and the Malays, Muslims.

In the 16th century Sri Lanka came under the sway of Portugal with which came Roman Catholicism. The Dutch introduced the Protestant faith which was continued by the British who came in the early 19th century. Following the great Second Advent Awakening of the 19th century, Seventh-day Adventist Christians came out from all evangelical faiths to proclaim the

¹Seventh-day Adventist Church Yearbook (Maryland: Review & Herald, 1999), 351.

three angels' messages. "Seventh-day Adventists came to Sri Lanka in 1904."¹

B. Education In Sri Lanka

Education has always played a most significant role in the history of the nation as well as the lives of the people. There are 6 large universities in the country.

Sri Lanka's literacy rate of 89 percent for males and 80 percent for females compares favourably to that of most South Asian countries. Education is free at all levels and is compulsory between the ages of 5 and 13. Secondary, technical and vocational, and higher education are also available.²

Most schools are either run by the government, or, if conducted by organized religious denominations, aided by government inspectors acting under provincial education officers. Sri Lanka has provided free education to all her citizens over the last 50 years. As a result the nation has achieved a very high literacy rate of almost 90 percent.

Adventist educational work has gone hand in hand with the evangelistic growth of the church in Sri Lanka almost from the very beginning. Today there are 6 institutions of learning operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church and about 8 church schools scattered throughout the island.

C. The Need for Adventist Education

The secular educational system of the country has shown serious defects. "There has been a sharp decline in the standard and quality of education at all levels."¹ Adventist education on the other hand has provided highly religious and moral training to hundreds of young people.

Serious shortcomings have appeared at every level of the education system. Statistics reveal a dismal situation. Approximately 14 % of children in the compulsory school going age (5-14 Years), do not attend school. Recent studies show that only about a fifth of Grade V children attain mastery levels in writing and even less in Mathematics and Health. At GCE Ordinary Level in 1995, the failure rate in all eight subjects was one in ten. At GCE Advanced Level,

¹R. S. Fernando, The Isles Shall Not Wait (Colombo: Lakehouse, 1987), iii.

²The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. XI (Auckland: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1988), 191.

¹General Education Reforms (Colombo: The Presidential Task Force On General Education, 1997), 1.

one in eleven failed in all four subjects offered.²

Adventist education, with its unique philosophy of integration of faith and learning offers a better solution to the educational dilemma in Sri Lanka. The non-Christian educational system of Sri Lanka has been greatly influenced by Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. As a result it is “based on the assumption that man is born good, and that the purpose of education is to develop the good latent in children. This premise naturally leads to a child-centered or subject-centered philosophy of education.”³ The Adventist philosophy of education is based on the belief that the ultimate purpose of man is to love and serve God and his fellowmen and that education must be directed toward helping him achieve that end. The failure of the secular educational system of Sri Lanka may be seen reflected to a certain degree in the chaos currently created in the country by the civil war. The most serious problem facing the government is the long-standing Sinhalese-Tamil conflict, which has turned increasingly violent since 1983 and disrupted both the economy and the education of the country. In fact the separatists have an entire regiment for students called EROS, Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students. Seventh-day Adventist schools have always upheld the ideology of non-violence as taught by Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Furthermore, “On April 5, 1971, a violent rebellion broke out, led by a group called the People’s Liberation Front or Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). Bands of students and university graduates attacked police stations and seized several areas of the country.”¹ This shows that,

The education system does not produce pupils with the knowledge and understanding and the skills and attitudes appropriate for successful living. Total personality development, characterized by creativity, initiative, discipline, team spirit, respect and tolerance for other people and other cultures, is not achieved.²

²Ibid.

³Don F. Neufeld, Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1966), 368.

¹Colombo Handbook, (Colombo: American Women’s Association, 1989), 8.

²General Education Reforms, 1.

One of the major objectives of the Adventist school system is to bring about the salvation of young people through acceptance of and faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. They help them achieve growth in character so that they will become God-fearing, honest, stable, and productive members of church and society. The curricula in Adventist schools are designed to instruct the students in a Biblical view of the origin of life, of man's duty, and of man's destiny; and to safeguard them from errors arising from the humanistic and materialistic world views of secular education in Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is the conviction of the researcher that the introduction and promotion of the value of Adventist education on a much larger scale than it is done at the present time may hold out some hope and provide some longer lasting solutions to the prevailing moral depravity of the present Sri Lankan community. It is also the hope of the writer that this research will motivate Adventists all over the world and in Sri Lanka particularly to seriously consider sending their children to Adventist schools in order to prepare them for good citizenship in this world as well as in the world to come.

II. THE UNIQUENESS OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION

The question may be raised, "Why Adventist education and why not secular education?" Adventist education contains certain important ingredients which make it unique and different from any other system of education in the world. Christian education in general has won the respect and admiration of most of the world. But more than that Adventist education in particular is unique because it not only educates and trains students for practical life in this world but also for life in the world to come. It inspires its recipients to strive towards higher and nobler standards. This is reflected in the following quotation by a pioneer founder of Adventist

education. “Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness, Godlikeness is the goal to be reached.”¹

One of the foremost characteristics of Adventist education which makes it stand out above the rest is the fact that Adventist education goes beyond mere book learning and worldly knowledge. The same author writes again. “Heart education is far more important than mere book learning. It is well, even essential to have a knowledge of the world in which we live; but if we leave eternity out of our reckoning, we shall make a failure from which we can never recover.”¹

The integration of faith and learning is held as a priority in Adventist education. The Creator Himself was the first teacher and Eden was the first school. Adam and Eve received the best kind of education from the Master Teacher. This was also Christ’s method of teaching and learning which he instructs His church to follow. “Faith must not be led to embrace superstitious ideas, fictitious sentiments. Leave out such ideas from your teaching, and give the children and youth the same kind of instruction that Christ gave, - lessons of faith in a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord.’”²

Furthermore, the basis of Adventist education is love. Love to God and fellowmen is the sole motivating factor. “Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true

¹Ellen G. White, Education (Idaho: Pacific Press, 1952), 19.

¹Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education (Tennessee: Southern Publishing, 1923), 388.

²Ibid, 182.

education.”³

Adventist education teaches the sanctity of the human body. It provides an intelligent understanding of the principles governing its functions and the care it should receive. The daily programme which combines recreational activity, in the form of productive labour, with the study of books, encourages habits of industry, regularity, and punctuality which foster maximum physical vitality and mental health. Since Adventist education provides students with a broad outlook and an understanding and appreciation of the world in which he lives it certainly possesses the power to eradicate narrow mindedness and prejudice in young minds and fits them to enter the many branches of denominational service. Adventist schools in Sri Lanka place a large emphasis on the role of religion in the personal life of their students. They seek to establish in them an unswerving allegiance to the principles of the Christian faith, and a sense of personal responsibility to participate in the programme of the church. Students are encouraged to develop a distinctly Christian philosophy of life as the basis for the solution of the political, social, and economic problems faced by the country in the new millennium.

It can truly be said that it has been these very ideals which indeed have earned Adventist education in Sri Lanka its place in the hearts of Christians and non-Christians, government officials and citizens at large.

III. PROSPECTS OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

The concept of religious oriented education is not at all foreign to Sri Lanka.

³Ibid, 165.

“Pirivenas,”¹ are “ancient seats of learning located traditionally in Buddhist temples.”²

Therefore, a philosophy such as that of Adventist education is not necessarily foreign to this land.

This ought to make the Adventist system quite an acceptable ideal in this society. It is not surprising that the establishment of Adventist schools has not found much objection or opposition.

The State operates schools to meet the general needs of the people and cannot be expected to offer a type of education which alone will provide the training and experience needed by Seventh-day Adventist youth who are preparing to carry ‘the gospel to all the world in this generation.’ This is the duty of the church.¹

A. Adventist Education as an Answer to the Present Moral Crisis

In the present crisis of the nation no one can deny the need of a system of education that will more adequately develop the qualities of honesty, integrity, purity, unselfishness, self-control, and compassion. The island nation is crying out for a people who will exhibit these neglected character attributes. This, to a great extent may be accomplished in this land by the value system of Adventist education since Adventist education holds the potential and the capacity to produce the very results needed in a deteriorating society. Adventist education in Sri Lanka has certainly shared the praise of several government leaders and educators and is held in high esteem in this country.

One of the greatest moral issues in the country at the present time is the racial hatred in the hearts of young and old which has given rise to the current ethnic crisis. Non Christian religions are bankrupt of the power to change such human nature. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace possesses the power to transform such hatred into love for fellowmen. Adventist education is one of the chief channels through which the Holy Spirit accomplishes such changes in the lives of young people. Adventist schools create and provide an atmosphere

¹The Encyclopedia Americana Vol. VI. (New York: Americana Corporation, 1961), 239b.

²Ibid.

¹Seventh-day Adventists, Total Education (Poona: Oriental Watchman), 10.

in which young people of all races come together, live together, worship together and study together. It provides a strong bond of fellowship regardless of caste, creed or colour and teaches young people to treat all alike. Thus Adventist education in Sri Lanka can effect a greatly positive influence in the solving of the current ethnic divide in the country because,

In Christ all race prejudices, all national distinctions, are laid aside, and we are all brethren, engaged in the work of advancing the Redeemer's kingdom. We are all one in Christ, and should unite heartily in an effort to educate and train an army of young men and women in such a way that they will be consistent, well-balanced Christians, able to understand and explain the Scriptures.¹

The value of Adventist education in Sri Lanka can be seen in the unity which exists among the Adventist community. Several young people have found and married life partners belonging to ethnic groups other than their own. The church has employed and given equal opportunities to members of all racial and ethnic groups without prejudice in all areas and departments of the church including its leadership.

Poor performance as a nation, civil strife, high crime rates and high suicide rates are but a few indicators of the failures of education which should really alarm and motivate us. We cannot find solutions by confining ourselves to formal instruction in schools, but must be far more concerned about a total approach.²

Adventist schools in Sri Lanka are some of the only institutions in the country which are established, equipped, and maintained for the specific purpose of providing total education for the youth of the modern generation. They offer training which is designed to fit them physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially to live and serve here and now as law-abiding, useful, happy citizens and, at the same time, to lead them to a personal acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ and to give them the training necessary to become effective soul winners. Adventist education prepares youth physically, intellectually, spiritually, and socially to live victoriously in this present world and for effective service in God's cause, through the organized work of the church. This is made possible by providing a balanced education.

¹Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education (Tennessee: Southern Publishing, 1923), 203.

²General Education Reforms, 2.

B. The Training of Youth for Evangelism

Seventh-day Adventist institutions of learning are intended to prepare the youth for service to God and humanity. This requires a training in those skills which will educate the individual to become a useful member of the society in which he lives and a thoroughgoing Christian whose influence will tell for good in this life and will continue throughout eternity.¹

One of the greatest needs of the Sri Lanka mission field today is the need for young evangelists to spearhead the proclamation of the three angels' messages. Adventist education seeks to impart a sense of mission in meeting the country's urgent needs. It strives to "awaken in children and youth sympathy and the spirit of sacrifice for the suffering millions."² In Adventist education, the religious experience desired is not taken as something which causes persons to merely isolate themselves from the world,³ not as requiring men to "live reclusive lives"⁴ Rather, it recognizes that the world is a field for evangelism and spiritual harvest. This sense of mission may be imparted to young people through Adventist education in Sri Lanka. The Seventh-day Adventist church in Sri Lanka has established its educational system not only to save its youth but also to the guide and train them for mission since every phase of this system is designed to impart to the youth a sense of their mission in this country and to prepare the church to fulfill its responsibility of being "God's appointed agency for the salvation of men."¹ "Every son and daughter is called to be a missionary; we are called to the service of God and our fellow men; and to fit us for this service should be the object of our education."²

The challenge of evangelism and soul winning in all of its phases is kept constantly

¹Total Education, 9

²Ellen G. White, Education (Idaho: Pacific Press, 1952), 269.

³Idem., Counsels to Teachers, Parents and Students Regarding Christian Education (California: Pacific Press, 1913), 323.

⁴Idem., Fundamentals of Christian Education (Tennessee: Southern Publishing, 1923), 483.

¹Idem., Acts of the Apostles (California: Pacific Press, 1911), 9.

²Idem., Ministry of Healing (Arizona: Inspiration Books, 1986), 395.

before the students in classroom lectures, chapel exercises, and in all of the activities of Adventist schools. The students are not allowed to lose sight of the fact that they are a chosen group, called of God to go forth into His vineyard to carry the everlasting gospel to the perishing millions about them.

C. Preparing Church Leaders

Leadership is the most-sought-after talent in the world today. History records the deeds of the world's great, many good and many bad. Each had the ability to influence, inspire and galvanize into action masses of people. They were able to transfer their ideas and concepts into the minds of others and to encourage their followers to become dynamic forces for good or for evil. Today the same processes are being used to effect similar goals and results, and for this reason leadership stands as a most powerful force.³

Adventist education does not neglect the training of leadership qualities in children. There seems to be a lack of professionally trained leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist church in Sri Lanka at the present time. There is still a dependence on overseas personnel to fill certain positions of leadership. Therefore, Adventist education in Sri Lanka faces the tremendous challenge of training and producing good leaders to take over the reins of church administration in the country. At the same time it is most encouraging to note that today the sons and daughters of the Seventh-day Adventist church in Sri Lanka who are serving with distinction in the cause of God, are largely the products of our own schools.

The Sabbath School, the Adventist Youth society with its faith sharing activities, youth evangelistic efforts, prayer bands, worship periods, seminars, choirs, publications and other social and religious organizations and activities afford ample opportunities for leadership experience. It is repeatedly pointed out that the students are the future leaders of God's work in this field and as such the brethren and the Lord are counting on them. A classic example of this is found in the mission statement of Lakpahana Adventist College & Seminary: "The mission of Lakpahana Adventist College and Seminary is to prepare students for service to God and to their fellowmen."¹ G. Irving Logan, in his article,

³Youth Ministry Handbook and Leadership Training Manual, 6.

¹Lakpahana Adventist College & Seminary Bulletin and Student Handbook (Mailapitiya: 2000), 4.

“Ministering to the Secular Student in a Christian College suggests the following specific avenues through which non Christian students obtain exposure to Christianity: Religion classes, chapel, devotionals during class periods, faith and learning integrated classes, campus or other church involvement, Bible study fellowship groups, mission experiences, fellowship at Christian social activities, group fellowship in Christian homes of faculty, staff and students, individual fellowship with Christian faculty or staff members, individual fellowship with Christian students and Christian sponsors.²

IV. SOME CHALLENGES FOR ADVENTIST EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

The civilized world of Sri Lanka today is appalled at the mounting crime among children and youth. National leaders are realizing that this has come about as one of the results of the wrong kind of education, an education that denies the authority of God’s Word and sets aside the claims of His law. The secular schools of this country have demonstrated their inability to provide moral education. Such an education apart from God in which science is deified and infidel sentiments are part of the teaching befogs the minds of the youth and leaves them in a state of doubt, uncertainty and scepticism. In such environments as these, how can we expect the secular schools of the land to prepare our Seventh-day Adventist youth for service in the cause of God? According to the admission of the present minister of education in Sri Lanka, “The prevailing problems of the country cannot be solved unless a suitable system of education is introduced for the benefit of the present generation.”¹ Adventist education could very well be that “suitable system of education.”

Children are “being denied the right to education . . . This breeds contempt towards society and in later life many are drawn towards crime as a form of revenge.”²

The recent news media has revealed several discrepancies in the public schools system in

²G. Irving Logan, “Ministering to the Secular Student in a Christian College,” Christ in the Classroom, Vol. I (Maryland: Institute for Christian Teaching, 1991), 202.

¹“Education and Discipline Vital for Children’s Future,” Daily News 30 January 2001, 24.

²Geetha W. Bibile, “Scarred for Life,” Daily News 2 Feb. 2001, 5.

this country. This has already resulted in a rapidly degenerating society which has no moral values and little respect for human life itself. It is common among families rendered homeless by the war, family feuds, etc., to use children as beggars. Such children, from a young age are encouraged to seek a relatively easy existence and often fall prey to innumerable street vices. Girls usually end up as harlots while boys are inevitably lured into underworld activities.

The lure of West Asian petro dollars prompts many unsuspecting parents to leave young children for their own selfish ends. By the time parents return to learn of their horror the manifold cruelties inflicted upon their offspring, it may be too late to undo the physical and psychological damage that has been done.¹

“Similarly child abuse in schools including corporal punishment in this enlightened day of the third millennium as a matter of concern, not only to parents but also to educationists in this country.”²

Horrifying incidents such as teachers assaulting children until they fall ill, male teachers harassing female students sexually, sometimes making them pregnant and even older children using smaller children for remorseless enjoyment etc are but a few that continue to occur in this country.³

Ellen White warns, “Could the instructors of children and youth have the result of their mistaken discipline mapped out before them, they would change their plan of education . . .”⁴

Adventist schools in Sri Lanka have become as havens of refuge for children coming from broken homes and families. About forty per cent of the students enrolled in the boarding at Lakpahana Adventist College & Seminary come from such backgrounds. Thus the boarding facilities at Lakpahana have become a great attraction to parents with family problems for entrusting their children to a safe environment away from the tragic scenes of home life. Many parents who go to the Middle East for employment are happy to board their children at

¹Ibid.

²Geetha W. Bibile, “Scarred for Life,” Daily News 2 Feb. 2001, 5.

³Ibid.

⁴Ellen G. White, Counsels to Teachers, Parents and Students Regarding Christian Education (California: Pacific Press, 1913), 76.

Lakpahana regardless of their religious differences in order to escape maltreatment by guardians. The Adventist educational system provides the opportunity for abused children to encounter the power of the Holy Spirit as they go through a very effective programme of rehabilitation to undo the damage of emotional retardation and become useful citizens. Furthermore, Adventist educators in Sri Lanka often organize in-service training for their staff and faculty in which Adventist principles of discipline and classroom management are taught, discussed and implemented.

A. The Competition

One of the strongest appeals of secular education in Sri Lanka seems to be the fact that it is offered free of charge in all government schools throughout the island. Adventist education on the other hand is considered to be one of the most expensive. Enrollment of Seventh-day Adventist students in Adventist schools has been on the decline over the past several years. One of the reasons for this is because many Seventh-day Adventist parents themselves have yielded to the pressures of sending their children to non-Adventist schools. Therefore the church in Sri Lanka faces the tremendous challenge of convincing parents and students that though expensive, Adventist education is still worth the cost.

Furthermore, there have been critical observations that the Seventh-day Adventist school system in Sri Lanka does not offer marketable degrees and provide professional training for youth. As a result there has been an exodus of Adventist youth to outside institutions of learning for professional training. In order to counteract this challenge Adventist educators in Sri Lanka are endeavoring to introduce vocational training courses and programmes such as computer science, special English skills, preschool teacher training, and agriculture and industrial arts, alongside academic pursuits. The Danish government has invested almost one million Sri Lankan rupees in establishing an exclusive vocational training centre at Lakpahana Adventist College & Seminary in Mailapitiya. The project targets the training of a minimum of ten young people each year in workshop training and preparing them for self-employment jobs in the public and private sectors.

In order that young people may attend school in an atmosphere conducive to spiritual development, contemplation, and study undisturbed by the distractions of cities, efforts have

been made to locate Lakpahana Adventist College & Seminary in a rural area where the students may have numerous opportunities for the study of nature and vocational pursuits. “The Seminary is situated in Mailapitiya, twelve miles South of Kandy.”¹ “The climate is healthful and invigorating and suited for the pursuit of study and physical culture. There is an appealing natural beauty about the campus which is surrounded by a coconut plantation and rolling hills.”² Agricultural enterprises are carried on in connection with Lakpahana. “All of our students and staff are engaged in a cooperative work program.”³ The Roman Catholic church in Sri Lanka took the cue from Lakpahana to establish their own vocational training centre called Ragama Boys’ Town which is basically founded upon Adventist values of education. For many years Seventh-day Adventist education in Sri Lanka has had the advantage of a unique philosophy of education from the pen of Mrs. Ellen G. White. Though there have arisen differing concepts as to how these inspired counsels should be applied in Sri Lanka, attempts have been made to put into practice the principles enunciated in the development of our school system. Moore observes that “On the whole our schools have graduated students well trained and well disciplined, holding to a value system in harmony with biblical ideals.”¹ This can be said to true of Adventist education in Sri Lanka. A majority of Adventist graduates in Sri Lanka are employed in church work and they have made a unique contribution to our church growth.

B. Lack of Trained Personnel

Most Adventist schools in Sri Lanka face a shortage of professionally trained SDA teachers especially in demanding fields such as science and mathematics. Under compulsive pressure our schools have resorted to employing non Adventist teachers at least temporarily to fill in such vacant lots. The Southern Asia Pacific Division is making efforts to aid the Sri Lanka mission to sponsor Adventist teachers to obtain academic degrees in needed fields of study. The

¹Lakpahana Adventist College & Seminary Bulletin (1979-1980), 1.

²Ibid.

³Raymond S. Moore, Adventist Education at the Crossroads (California: Pacific Press, 1976), 168.

¹Ibid.

Division has maintained an on going teacher upgrading programme consistently for the past several years.

C. Religious Convictions

One of the greatest challenges faced by Adventist youth in Sri Lanka is the obtaining of Sabbath privileges in their education and employment. Coaching classes for the highly competitive public examinations are usually conducted on Sabbath. At times important examinations are scheduled on Saturday. Finding a job outside the church with Sabbath privileges is almost impossible in this non Christian country. As a result most Adventist graduates are employed by the church itself.

The Union Education Department has successfully negotiated with the government and obtained permission for Seventh-day Adventist students to appear for examinations which are scheduled on Saturdays, after sun down on Sabbath. The church is also seriously considering the offering of training programmes which will equip Adventist young people to go out and become self-supporting lay members in the community.

All Adventist schools in Sri Lanka seek to comply with government educational policies. This compliance, however, is not always easy since incorporating faith and learning into such a secular syllabus is rendered more difficult and complicated. The Adventist educational administration is currently drawing up a strategy whereby Adventist syllabi could be re-introduced into the church's educational system in affiliation with the department of education of Southern Asia Division in India. This will give the opportunity for students to choose either the government syllabus or the church's syllabus or both.

D. Economic Crisis

It is an internationally known fact that the island of Sri Lanka is at the present time experiencing a great economic crisis. As a result qualified and promising youth are forced to seek good income generating ventures as soon as they complete either their secondary or higher secondary education in order to support themselves and their families. This has tended to reduce the demand for Adventist higher education. In the meantime Adventist education is quite expensive as it is all around the world. It is more evident in Sri Lanka where public education is

offered free to students. This is a great challenge to the church. The Union education department has requested all institutions to set up a special “trust fund” for the purpose of sponsoring young people who are interested in but are unable to afford Adventist education. Adventist schools’ financial plans including work/study programmes and industrial income help to keep school fees at the lowest possible point thus enabling more students to obtain a Christian education. It is a notable feature that the boarding fees of Lakpahana Adventist College & Seminary is one of the cheapest in the country. Youth training programmes offer opportunity to Adventist youth to obtain on-the-job experience while providing the institution low-cost labour.

Through the years, Lakpahana developed and operated an efficient industrial complex. This had included a rice mill, a cereal puffing plant, a dairy, a poultry farm, a bakery and a carpentry unit. Agricultural enterprises too have been successfully pursued . . . Most of the industries have remained viable propositions providing opportunities for students to earn while learning a useful trade.¹

IV. CONCLUSION

In contrast to the situation in worldly school, every activity of the Adventist educational system has its prime objective the training of the youth in Christian principles, godly living and the knowledge of the Scriptures. This education gives them social grace and spiritual enlightenment along with mental and physical skills and furnishes workers with a truly Christian philosophy. It produces citizens who believe, live, and teach the Adventist way of life. Adventist schools in Sri Lanka are the only safe places for the training of the youth of this church, who are pledged to the finishing of the work of the gospel in this generation.

Adventist schools in Sri Lanka try their best to maintain a spiritual atmosphere in which prayer, worship, and doing the will of God is promoted as the ideal and accepted pattern of living. The Bible is made the centre of all study and teaching. For example, at Lakpahana, the administration requires teachers to show clearly in their weekly lesson plans as to how they will be integrating faith and learning in all of their lessons. Our schools promote social, cultural, and emotional growth, resulting in stable, balanced citizens who are a credit to their community, and

¹R. S. Fernando, The Isles Shall Not Wait: The Story of Seventh-day Adventists in Sri Lanka (Colombo: Lake House, 1987), 129-132.

who are fitted to bear life's responsibilities, and who have developed insights and outlooks that make life worth living. Dr. Rasi's statement is valid here.

True education teaches students to make decisions based on informed moral principles and permanent values, regardless of their circumstances. Thus, our campuses offer the ideal setting to examine safely the deepest questions about life's meaning, purpose, and destiny. Together, teachers and students seek the Holy Spirit's wisdom in learning what God wants done in and through us.¹

¹Humberto M. Rasi, "What Makes A School Adventist?" The Journal of Adventist Education, 2000.

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